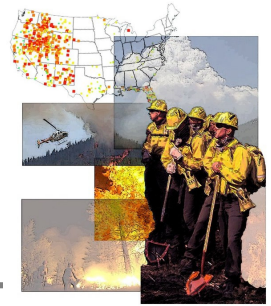


National Fire Plan

USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior

www.fireplan.gov



Accountability & Leadership

Oversight, coordination, program development, integration, and monitoring are critical to successful implementation of the NFP. In response to congressional direction, a full range of joint accountability measures, including budget and financial systems reports, and oversight reviews for assessing and evaluating program accomplishments have been developed.

Transparent, well-articulated, consistent policies and procedures provide for better oversight and review, and lead to greater accountability. Partners and stakeholders of the NFP cooperated on many accountability efforts during FY 2003. Such efforts include the following:

Cost Containment – In FY 2003, the USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior directed fire suppression financial oversight to key field leadership and established criteria to serve as thresholds for initiating large fire cost reviews. Basing information on these criteria, national interagency teams composed of representatives from various Federal and State agencies completed five Large Incident Strategic Decision and Assessment Oversight Reviews. These reviews revealed generally cost-effective, efficient management at the incident level, with the appropriate emphasis on cost-containment priorities demonstrated by Command and Agency Administrator leads. Reviews took place on the Aspen Fire (AZ), Fawn Peak Complex (WA), Northwest Montana Area Command (MT), Northern Rockies Geographical Area Command Center (MT, ID, WY), and the B&B Complex (OR). Each review developed recommendations to further improve efficiency and reduce operational costs. Overall, the reviewed fires were professionally managed with a great deal of agency administrator cost containment direction and interaction with the incident management teams.

Common Budget Structure – The ability to compare budget information is essential for consistent accountability, agency comparability, unit cost calculations, and performance measurements. On June 20, 2003, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council approved a joint Department of the Interior and Agriculture proposal for common budget structure for all wildland firefighting agencies.

The new structure proposed for FY 2005 establishes a common definition for similar activities, reduces the total number of budget items, and highlights key portions of the wildland fire management appropriations linked to performance measures. This work represents a first between two departments and displays a significant effort to ensure accountability and reduce costs.

Performance Measures – Outcome-based performance measures are the cornerstone of the 10-year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan. Those measures – adopted and approved by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, 17 western governors, and numerous stakeholders – establish a long-term commitment to protect communities and the environment from the impacts of catastrophic fire. The measures will indicate trends, unit costs, changes in the landscape, and other features associated with specific actions and outcomes. The performance measures are an integral part of each wildland firefighting agency's individual performance evaluation, and as such, represent a commitment to Congress and the public to use wisely funds and resources.

The USDA Forest Service and the Department of Interior have taken several steps to ensure that National Fire Plan activities meet the priorities and objectives described in the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, the collaborative plan for the National Fire Plan. These actions include the following: Standardized Performance Measures, Standardized Interagency Accomplishment Reporting System, Senior Level Management Oversight, and Implementation Plan task item tracking.

Leadership and Organization

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) completed a highly successful first year by working to eliminate interagency, interdepartmental differences for a seamless delivery of a coordinated fire protection program. During FY 2003, highlights of the WFLC accomplishments include the following:

- Approving of an interagency policy for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation treatments that ensures consistency in the timing and funding of treatments and monitoring.
- Adopting field guidance to establish broad, national, compatible standards for identifying communities at risk, while still allowing maximum flexibility at the State and regional levels for risk determinations.
- Adopting a common budget structure for wildland fire management appropriations.
- Adopting interagency direction for the Implementation Plan of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Policy.